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Speeches

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The Current Sugar Situation And Price Support Program

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to discuss the current sugar situation and price support program. As you know, the world sugar market has moved from one of relative shortage to over-supply in the past year and a half. This has been reflected in the depressed world sugar prices. In October of 1980, the average world raw sugar price was 41.10 cents per pound. By the end of last week—June 10, the average world spot price had plunged to 6.54 cents per pound. Concurrently, since late December of 1981, the Reagan Administration is supporting the domestic price of sugar as mandated by Congress in the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. With plummeting world sugar prices, this has led to the adoption of a series of measures designed to support the domestic price of sugar.

I would like to begin by summarizing the major provisions of the sugar price support program mandated by Congress in the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. Next, I would like to cite the legislative authorities available to President Reagan for supporting the price of sugar, which is followed by a discussion of the underlying factors that prompted recent policy actions. Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the future of the domestic sugar industry.

The Agriculture and Food Act of 1981

The Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 that was passed by Congress and then signed into law by President Reagan on Dec. 22, 1981, is a four-year authorization bill for many farm programs. Generally, the commodity provisions apply to the 1982-1985 crop years. For some commodities, the 1981 act represents a continuation of current policy; for others, including sugar, it marks a new beginning. The purpose of

the new price support sugar program is to provide domestic producers of sugar a certain measure of protection against the vagaries of the world market for sugar. At the same time, the Congress made it clear that the program was to be administered in such a way that there should be no government expenditures under the program.

Sugar legislation under the 1981 act established a purchase agreement program at 16.75 cents per pound for raw cane sugar processed between Dec. 22, 1981—the date of enactment—and March 31, 1982. In October of 1982, a nonrecourse loan program is mandated with a loan rate for raw cane sugar of not less than 17.0 cents per pound. Sugar processed after March 31, 1982, will be supported through the loan program. The loan rate for raw cane sugar must be increased to not less than 17.5 cents per pound in 1983, 17.75 cents per pound in 1984, and 18.0 cents per pound in 1985. The purchase or loan rate for refined beet sugar is to be established at a rate that is fair and reasonable in relation to the purchase or loan rate for raw cane sugar.

Legislative Authorities Available to Support the Domestic Price of Sugar

Domestic sugar prices can be protected through a combination of the duties, fees and quotas. There are two primary legislative authorities which can be used to achieve this objective.

A. Headnote 2, subpart 10(A), schedule 1, Tariff Schedules of the United States.

The president is authorized to proclaim duties and quotas under Headnote 2 to give due consideration to the interests in the U.S. sugar market of domestic producers and our trading partners. The minimum duty which may be imposed under this authority is 0.625 cents per pound—a degree basis—and the maximum is 2.8125 cents. The authority to impose quotas is without limitation.

B. Section 22, Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933.

This statute empowers the president to impose import fees or quotas—but not both—on imports whenever he finds that such imports tend to render ineffective or materially interfere with price support programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Section 22 permits the imposition of fees not in excess of 50 percent ad valorem or

quotas not in excess of 50 percent of the quantity imported during a representative period determined by the president.

Recent Administration Policy Initiatives

A. World Sugar Situation

I would like to now briefly summarize the world sugar situation and the Reagan Administration's policy actions to support the domestic price of sugar. As stated at the outset, price expectations in the world sugar market began to turn down in the spring of 1981 when the sugarbeet acreage of the European Community substantially expanded and weather conditions were generally favorable. By September of last year, when a very large crop in the EC became virtually assured and crop prospects remained good in most of the other parts of the world, the monthly average world raw sugar price had fallen to 11.65 cents per pound. Since the implementation of the sugar purchase agreement program in late December of 1981, the world sugar price has continued to fall, dipping to below 7 cents per pound during the first week of June—the lowest price reached since mid-1978. Based on the prospect of adding over 5 million tons to global sugar stocks, the fundamentals suggest relatively low world sugar prices for the remainder of 1982 and into 1983. Any strengthening of world sugar prices in 1983 will be dependent on reduced production prospects for the 1982/83 beet and cane crops, as well as improved demand.

B. Initial Actions to Restrain Imports

Given the world sugar supply and the price situation at the beginning of this year, and the mandate of the 1981 farm act to support the price of domestic sugar at specified levels that were above world prices, it was obvious that imports, if not restrained, would displace domestic sugar and force it into the hands of the Commodity Credit Corporation. Such a result would be highly undesirable and contrary to the intent of Congress. It would cost the taxpayers, potentially, hundreds of millions of dollars. At the same time, it would be severely detrimental to domestic producers, who would lose their market share to foreign sugar.

To prevent this, President Reagan, acting upon Secretary Block's recommendation, used his authority under Section 22 to issue

Proclamation 4887, Dec. 23, 1981. This proclamation increased the import fees on raw sugar from 1.531 to 2.1418 cents per pound and the fee on refined sugar from 2.051 to 3.1104 cents per pound. Proclamation 4887 also modified the procedure for adjusting the import fee on a quarterly and intra-quarterly basis.

At the same time, the president also issued Proclamation 4888, which increased the duty under Headnote 2 from the minimum of 0.625 cents per pound to 2.8125 cents—the maximum currently allowed by law.

Subsequently, because of plummeting world sugar prices, the import fee for raw sugar was increased to 3.0703 cents per pound effective April 1, 1982, by a quarterly adjustment, and to 4.0703 cents effective April 23, by an intra-quarter adjustment. The import fee for refined sugar was increased to 4.17.2 and 5.17.2 cents per pound on those same dates, respectively.

C. Effectiveness of the Fee and Duty System

Imports of raw sugar into the U.S. rose significantly during the fourth quarter of 1981 in anticipation of the duty and fee increases that would accompany a price support program. The domestic price of raw sugar—New York basis, No. 12 contract—averaged 16.28 cents per pound in November and 17.07 cents in December of 1981. Then, primarily because of the actual increases in duties and fees which followed enactment of the 1981 farm bill, the domestic price during January of 1982 averaged about 18.0 cents per pound. However, this was still more than half a cent below the 18.58 cents per pound market price needed to avoid government takeover of sugar. The situation worsened in February and March of 1982 when the domestic price averaged only slightly above 17.cents per pound. This was principally due to large and heavily discounted duty-free imports from Thailand before it lost its duty-free status under the Generalized System of Preferences April 1.

With little improvement in the domestic spot price during April of 1982, which averaged 17.89 cents per pound, it became more apparent that major segments of the sugar industry would be forced to sell sizeable quantities of raw cane and refined beet sugar to the CCC unless the domestic market price increased significantly before Oct. 1,

1982. With the drop in the world price below 9.84 cents per pound, it was no longer possible to achieve the market stabilization price through fees and duties. In late April, Secretary Block advised the president to impose restrictive import quotas on a country-by-country basis until such time as the world market price strengthened sufficiently to permit a return to an effective system of fees and duties.

D. Import Quotas

On May 5, the president signed Proclamation 4941 which, pursuant to the authority of Headnote 2 of the Tariff Schedules of the United States, established import quotas on a country-by-country basis. The import quotas are established for quarterly periods or such other periods of time as the secretary of agriculture deems appropriate. The amount of the quota is likewise established by the secretary of agriculture.

The import quota for sugar entered for consumption between May 11 and June 30, 1982, inclusive, was established at 220,000 short tons. On June 15, the secretary announced that the quota for the third calendar quarter will be 420,000 short tons. The secretary also said he anticipated the quota would be changed to an annual quota beginning Oct 1. It is anticipated that the quota for the year beginning Oct. 1 will be 3.3 million short tons.

Country-by-country allocation of the quota is being done on a historical basis. Raw sugar imports for each country for the past seven years—1975-81—with the high and low values dropped for each country, were used to make the quota allocations. These allocations may be modified by the special trade representative if it is determined that such modifications are necessary to carry out our international obligation under the GATT and the International Sugar Agreement.

E. New Market Stabilization Price

Simultaneously with the quota proclamation, the president also issued Proclamation 4940 at the advice of the secretary of agriculture. This proclamation revised the Section 22 fee system by increasing the market stabilization price for the 1982 purchase agreement program to 19.88 cents per pound. This is the actual, minimum domestic price which the government is attempting to achieve. The proclamation also changed the average spot price quotation used to determine the

quarterly and intra-quarterly import fee adjustments from the world—No. 11 contract—spot price quotation to the domestic—No. 12 contract—spot price quotation. Current quarter fees for raw cane sugar were maintained at 4.0703 cents per pound with a differential of an additional cent for refined sugar, or 5.0703 cents per pound.

Proclamation 4940 increased the market stabilization price to cover the added transportation and handling costs associated with shipping sugar from Hawaii to Gulf ports and Atlantic ports north of Cape Hatteras compared with the cost of moving sugar from Florida to Atlantic ports north of Cape Hatteras. The proclamation also eliminated the 0.5 cents per pound allowance for duty-free imports as that factor would no longer be operative when using the domestic spot price quotation to calculate the import fees. Thus, the current MSP is calculated as follows:

	Cents/pound	MSP Components
	16.75	price support level
	2.93	transportation and handling costs
	0.20	incentive factor
Total	19.88	market stabilization price

As stated above, because the GSP factor is eliminated, 19.88 cents represents the minimum domestic price which the government is attempting to achieve.

Caribbean Basin Initiative

The CBI, if approved by Congress, would extend duty-free entry of sugar to all countries in the Caribbean Basin. At present, all countries—other than Cuba—of the Caribbean Basin are eligible under the GSP for duty-free entry of sugar except the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Panama. Since these three countries supply about 25 percent of the sugar imported into the U.S., extension of duty-free treatment could, without safeguards, interfere with the current price support program during periods of low world prices. Therefore, an annual import quota for these three countries has been fixed in the

proposed legislation at a total of 1.15 million metric tons. This amount represents approximately 110 percent of the average of each country's two high years of exports to the U.S. during the period 1979-81. In addition, the president indicated in his announcement of sugar quotas that the U.S. would take steps to provide Caribbean Basin sugar producers with "additional financial assistance during the remainder of this year."

Future Sugar Industry Issues

Despite the new sugar program, cane and beet sugar production in the U.S. is expected to decline 5 to 10 percent for the 1982/83 season to around 5.15 million metric tons. Part of this decline is expected to come from a return to more normal sugar yields for both beet and cane sugar from the high levels of 1981-82. A larger part of the domestic sugar production decline this season will likely come from reduced sugarbeet acreage. Beet sugar production may be down 16 to 19 percent from last year—largely due to the scheduled closing of four sugarbeet plants by this fall. Production of cane sugar in 1982-83 is projected to be down about 1 to 7 percent over last season.

On the demand side, U.S. sugar consumption has been shrinking, largely because of the greater use of corn sweeteners—in particular, high fructose corn sirup. Between 1979 and 1981, consumption of refined sugar fell about 1 million tons. A further drop of almost 200,000 tons is estimated for this year, while HFCS consumption could rise 300,000 tons. We anticipate little, if any, of this growth in HFCS use to be related to the current price support program for sugar. However, by providing minimum stabilization prices for domestic sugar, the sugar price support program establishes a price umbrella for corn sweeteners.

In administering the current sugar program, we view the restrictive quotas recently placed on the quantity of sugar that can be imported into the U.S. as temporary and needed only during this period of extremely depressed world sugar prices. Once domestic sugar prices are assured of remaining at reasonable levels, the restrictive import quotas will be removed.

I would like to close with one final point—a point that applies particularly to sugarcane technologists and others working in the

domestic sugar industry. It is imperative that the domestic sugar industry strive to improve its efficiency. This applies to all parts of the industry—from producers to retailers. The domestic sugar price support program is mandated through the 1985 crop. While the support levels may not be high enough to ensure profits, the program is protecting domestic producers from extremely low world prices and large operating losses. This time must be used wisely by the domestic sugar industry to adjust. Increased foreign sugar production and continued inroads by sugar substitutes will not subside.

The argument for a domestic price support program for sugar was made on the grounds that an efficient domestic sugar industry is essential; we should not depend totally on foreign supplies. We now import about half our needs. Arguments were also made that the U.S. is the "dumping ground" for foreign sugar in surplus years, and that our producers should not have to compete against such trade practices. While these arguments may be valid, at least in part, the implementation of the current price support program has caused great concern among consumers and our trading partners around the world. In sum, the domestic sugar industry must work hard to improve its productivity and compete. This is the challenge—for you and others in the domestic sugar industry.

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News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

PROPOSED USDA RULE WOULD PERMIT STATES TO OPERATE WORKFARE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, June 14—"Though workfare demonstration projects for food stamp recipients have been operating for several years, proposed regulations announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture today provide states and local jurisdictions the option for the first time of adopting workfare as a permanent feature of the food stamp program," said Assistant Secretary Mary Jarratt.

Under the "workfare" concept, work eligible food stamp recipients participate in a work experience activity along with receiving their food stamp benefits. The public service work done in return for food stamp allotments is valued at the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher. A maximum of 20 hours per week could be required of any household.

The workfare demonstration projects, some of which began operating as early at July 1979, provided helpful information for policymakers.

"We believe workfare can provide valuable work experience to recipients in assisting them to become self-reliant, and we are hopeful that skills acquired in this program will enable more public assistance participants to transfer to private sector employment," the assistant secretary said.

Past workfare participants have engaged in a wide array of work activities, including learning how to operate heavy construction equipment, using existing electrical and carpentry skills for assistant community building projects, providing crafts activities to senior citizens and learning radio repair work.

The Agriculture and Food Act of 1981, Public Law 97-98, approved Dec. 22, 1981, authorized the extension of workfare as a permanent food stamp program feature at state or local political subdivision option. The law allows partipating jurisdictions to combine food stamp workfare operations with those from other workfare-type programs that states and local jurisdictions might already administer.

"Obviously, the program is more economically feasible when operated in conjunction with other public assistance programs, and we are delighted that P.L. 97-98 allows local jurisdictions to combine their food stamp workfare with that for aid to families with dependent children, for example," said Jarratt.

The state agency, through its local offices, would be responsible for referring eligible recipients to workfare operating agencies and for establishing and processing sanctions for noncompliance, under the proposed regulations. The state agency also would be responsible for monitoring job sites and for interviewing and assigning eligible recipients.

USDA's Food Nutrition Service would provide 50 percent funding to both state and operating agencies for costs incurred in administering a workfare program. As a part of this 50 percent funding, participants would be reimbursed up to $25 per month for transportation and for necessary work equipment which is not provided by the employer.

A comment period of 45 days is provided for this proposed rule. A final rule will then be issued, effective 30 days after its publication in the Federal Register.

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GREAT PLAINS WIND EROSION DOWN SHARPLY

WASHINGTON, June 15—Wind damaged less than half as much land in the Great Plains from November 1981 through May 1982 as it did during the same period a year earlier, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Peter C. Myers, chief of the USDA's Soil Conservation Service, said reports from the 10-state area indicate wind damaged 5,107,985 acres (2,043,194 hectares), down sharply from 12,488,237 wind-damaged acres (4,955,295 hectares) for the same seven months a year earlier.

Myers attributed the drop in damaged acres to good snow cover and adequate soil moisture.

Of the total land reported damaged, 91 percent, 4,653,338 acres (1,861,335 hectares) was cropland; 8 percent, 381,200 acres (152,480

hectares) was rangeland; and 1 percent, 73,447 acres (29,379 hectares) was other land.

Texas, with 1,641,508 acres (656,603 hectares) damaged, accounted for 32 percent of all land damaged. The southern plains reported 69 percent of the damaged acreage.

Major decreases were recorded in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Current wind erosion damages, compared with the same seven months a year earlier, are:

State	Counties Reporting	Nov. 1981-May 1982 Acres	Nov. 1981-May 1982 Hectares	Nov. 1980-May 1981 Acres	Nov. 1980-May 1981 Hectares
Montana	40	549,472	219,789	2,648,121	1,059,248
Nebraska	21	246,355	98,542	173,760	69,504
North Dakota	53	306,490	122,596	2,163,600	865,440
South Dakota	66	531,200	212,480	1,319,500	527,800
Wyoming	23	45,955	18,382	31,250	12,500
Colorado	37	451,380	180,552	2,305,400	922,160
Kansas	105	860,140	344,056	913,850	365,540
New Mexico	19	295,450	118,180	570,800	228,320
Oklahoma	30	180,035	72,014	407,200	162,880
Texas	147	1,641,508	656,603	1,954,756	781,962
TOTALS	541	5,107,985	2,043,194	12,488,237	4,995,295

Wind also destroyed crops or cover on 529,585 additional acres (211,834 hectares) of land not damaged. Of this, 72 percent, or 381,445 acres (152,578 hectares), was in the southern plains.

Each year, the Soil Conservation Service compiles wind erosion reports covering seven months—November through May—using data supplied by 541 counties in the Great Plains.

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SUGAR IMPORT QUOTA FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER FIXED AT 420,000 SHORT TONS

WASHINGTON, June 15—The U.S. import quota for sugar during the July-September quarter will be 420,000 short tons, raw value, or approximately 381,000 metric tons, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today.

Block also announced tentative plans to shift the quota administration to an annual basis, beginning with the 1983 fiscal year.

"It is our intention to move from quarterly quotas to an annual quota to simplify the contracting, programming and shipping problems with which the trade and industry must deal," Block said. "We realize certain safeguards will be necessary to prevent distortion of prices caused by such situations as the 'bunching' of imports at any particular time, especially when domestic crop marketings are at their peak. Until we have worked out these safeguards, our decision to move to an annual quota should be regarded as preliminary."

Block also said the quota amount for the year beginning this Oct. 1 is tentatively estimated to be 3.30 million short tons, raw value, or about 2.99 million metric tons.

The import quota controls are required under a May 5 presidential proclamation and are designed to bring domestic sugar prices up to the levels contemplated by the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. That legislation mandates that the U.S. Department of Agriculture must stand ready to take over all domestic sugar that cannot obtain the minimum support price in the commercial market.

Currently, the support level to the sugar cane or beet producer is 16.75 cents per pound, raw value. This is equivalent to approximately 19.88 cents per pound, delivered to the refinery.

Block said foreign sugar prices have been declining since last summer because of excess world production and heavily subsidized exports from the European Community. Recently, foreign prices have been less than 7 cents per pound, country of origin.

"To allow foreign sugar to displace domestic sugar in the United States market would force the waste of millions of dollars of public funds for purchasing and storing domestically produced sugar," Block said.

"It would also be highly detrimental to the interests of domestic producers, who would lose their market share to imported sugar," Block said.

The 420,000-ton quota for the next quarter represents estimated offshore requirements after analyzing total domestic needs, consumption, production and stock positions. The administrative procedures now in effect will be continued without change and country-by-country allocations will be in accordance with the percentages specified in the presidential proclamation.

Any unused allocations remaining from the initial May 11-June 30 quota of 220,000 short tons will not be carried forward, Block said.

Administration of the "basket" category of "other specified countries and areas" will remain unchanged at the present time. Block said USDA, in cooperation with other government agencies and the foreign govenments concerned, will develop procedures that will provide these smaller suppliers with improved access to the U.S. market.

Block also announced that work was under way to establish procedures for permitting quota-free entry of sugar for the purpose of refining and re-export. He said USDA will attempt to implement these procedures in time to become effective for fiscal 1983.

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MEDFLY QUARANTINES TO END IN PARTS OF TWO CALIFORNIA COUNTIES

WASHINGTON, June 16—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will release portions of California's Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties from Mediterranean fruit fly quarantine regulations on June 18.

"We have gone through a time period equivalent to three Medfly life cycles with intensive trapping without finding any Medflies," said Harvey L. Ford, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "We're confident there are no more Medflies in these areas."

The released areas include about 90 percent of Santa Clara and 30 percent of Santa Cruz Counties. Ford said fruits and vegetables may now move out of these areas without restriction.

The parts of these two counties still under regulation are: in Santa Clara County, the northwest portion as far south and east as Sunnyvale plus an area in the Santa Cruz Mountains around Lake Elsman; and in Santa Cruz County, in general, the portion north of the Forest of Nisene State Park. All of San Mateo and Alameda Counties are still under regulation, as well. Ford said the status of the remaining regulated areas will be evaluated during the summer.

Medfly host produce must be treated by approved methods before it leaves the regulated areas. If no more Medflies are found, the remaining areas could be released from regulation and declared "eradicated" about mid-September.

Notice of the new quarantine boundaries will be published in the June 18 Federal Register.

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MEXICAN FRUIT FLY LARVAE FOUND IN CITRUS SHIPMENT NOT AN INFESTATION

WASHINGTON, June 16—U.S. Department of Agriculture plant health officials said today the Mexican fruit fly larvae found in citrus shipped from Mexico to California earlier this month are not signs that California is infested.

"There is no evidence that the Mexican fruit fly is established in California," said Greg Rohwer, an official with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "These are isolated finds in a single shipment of fruit from Mexico."

The Mexican fruit fly damages a wide variety of fruits—among citrus, it prefers grapefruit, Rohwer said. It is found mainly in Mexico and Central America, and host fruit imported from these countries must first undergo treatment.

Rohwer said the wormy fruit had been treated and USDA is working with Mexican officials to determine what corrective action may need to be taken to prevent a repeat of the incident. He said it is possible for

larvae to survive for a time even in properly treated fruit, but the larvae will not grow to maturity and therefore could not start a new infestation.

"Consumers should be disturbed when they find wormy fruit," Rohwer said. "We want people to be observant and let us know if they see something suspicious, but they can be reassured that this is not a replay of the Medfly situation. The Mexican fruit fly is not established in California and we are not planning aerial or ground treatments.

"The Medfly infestation—and in particular, our recent Medfly Wormwatch public awareness campaign—have heightened everyone's awareness of the public's role in preventing new pest outbreaks," he said.

The Medfly hotline number is (408) 399-0100.

"If we had had this degree of awareness two years ago, it's possible the Medfly could have been nipped in the bud," said Rohwer. "But unlike the situation then, there is no sign of even a small infestation of Mexican fruit fly in California."

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USDA ADJUSTS INCOME GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL MEAL BENEFIT

WASHINGTON, June 17—The maximum income a family can earn and still have their children qualify for free or reduced price school meals will go up 10 percent on July 1.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Mary Jarratt said the change is a result of the annual cost-of-living adjustment made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help people keep up with inflation.

Under the adjustment, the income limit for free meal eligibility, which is set by Congress at 130 percent of the federal poverty line, will go from $10,990 to $12,090 for a family of four. Eligibility for reduced price meals, set at 185 percent of poverty, will rise from $15,630 to $17,210.

The federal poverty line is $9,300 for a family of four.

USDA is required by law to update the income limits each July 1. The guidelines govern participation in the free or low cost meal

programs under the national school lunch, school breakfast, child care food, special milk and commodity school programs.

Following are the annual income limits which will take effect for families of various sizes in the continental U.S. and the territories except Guam:

Family Size	Free Meal Eligibility	Reduced Price Meal Eligibility
1	6,080	$8,660
2	8,090	11,510
3	10,090	14,360
4	12,090	17,210
5	14,090	20,050
6	16,090	22,900
7	18,100	25,750
8	20,100	28,600
For each additional family member add:	2,000	2,850

The announcement also includes adjusted guidelines for Alaska, Hawaii and Guam.

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